

Chief Judge Delivers “The State of the Judiciary”



Photo by Eric DeLisle

On January 26, Chief Judge Robert M. Bell of the Maryland Court of Appeals presented the State of the Judiciary before the General Assembly.

“Two years ago, when I last addressed you, I announced that, ‘While not perfect, [the Maryland Judiciary] is in excellent functional condition.’ That continues to be the case,” Chief Judge Bell said.

He focused on the progress made by the Judiciary since his 1997 report, when he made a commitment to regaining the public’s trust and confidence in the court system. Since then, strides have been made in three key areas:

- ❖ Engaging in greater public outreach and education about the Judiciary.
- ❖ Providing more and better services for court users, and
- ❖ Making the courts more accessible to those who are unable to afford lawyers or lengthy proceedings.

Chief Judge Bell then stressed the recent accomplishments of the Judiciary, which included establishing family courts and family divisions in the five largest jurisdictions of the state, opening a Court Information Office, creating initiatives to improve foster care, revising jury management policies, increasing the availability of alternative dispute resolution, and working to increase *pro bono* involvement among our state’s lawyers. He praised the hard work and dedication of the judges and staff that “people” the Judiciary.

Chief Judge Bell also addressed the current situation in Baltimore City’s criminal courts, highlighting the aggressive strategies the Judiciary is currently undertaking. “Maryland’s Judiciary is poised, well prepared to enter, and meet the challenges of, the 21st century,” Chief Judge Bell said.

The full text can be viewed at www.courts.state.md.us ❖